Superfast train between Visakhapatnam and Mumbai

261. DR. Y. LAKHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had proposed to introduce a new superfast train between Visakhapatnam-Mumbai and Visakhapatnam-Bhubaneshwar Inter-city Express; and

(b) if so, by when the same would be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Increase in train accidents

262. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per the report of the Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety for 1998-99, the number of train accidents has been going up since 1996-97;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the steps taken to prevent the rising incidence of rail accidents; and

(d) what further steps are contemplated to improve safety measures in train journeys?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The total number of consequential train accidents occurred in 1996-97 was 381 which increased to 396 and 397 in 1997-98 and 1998-1999 respectively.

The number of consequential train accident in 1997-98, as compared to 1996-97, has increased primarily due to failure of Railway Staff.

During 1998-99 increase in accident was primarily due to equipment failure Accident on Konkan Railway has also added to the number of accidents.

(c) and (d) The steps taken to prevent accidents are as under:—

(i) The work of track circuiting has been accelerated on the trunk routes and other important main lines,

(ii) Modification of the signalling circuitry is being carried out to minimize chances of human errors in causing accidents,

(iii) Auxiliary warning system for giving advance warning about 'signal at danger' to the driver of the running train has been commissioned on Mumbai suburban sections,

(iv) Railway Board has cleared a pilot project of AWS for Tughlaqabad-Mathura section of Central Railway on a trial basis,

(v) Walkie-Talkie sets have been supplied to Drivers and Guards of all Passenger carrying trains. The same is presently being supplied to Drivers and Guards of goods trains also and the same is likely to be completed by 31th March, 2000.

(vi) There has been progressive increase in use of Tie Tamping and ballast cleaning machines for track maintenance.

(vii) For monitoring track geometry and running characteristics of the track, sophisticated track recording cars, oscillograph cars and portable accelerometer are being progressively used.

(viii) For detecting rail fractures and weld failure 96 more double rail Ultra Sonic Flaw Detectors are being procured.

(ix) In addition to the above, 2 Self Propelled Ultra Sonic Rail Testing Cars are also being procured,

(x) Maintenance facilities for coaches and wagons have been modernised and upgraded at many depots,

(xi) To prevent cases of cold breakage of axles, ROH Depots have been equipped with ultrasonic testing equipment for detection of flaws in the axles.

(xii) Whistle boards-Speed breakers and road signs have been provided at unmanned level crossings and visibility for drivers has been improved.

(xiii) Audio-visual publicity campaigns to educate road users on how to make a safe crossing are conducted.

(xiv) Steps have been taken to prevent inflammable and explosive materials from being carried in passenger trains.

(xv) Periodic Safety Audit of different divisions by interdisciplinary teams from zonal headquarters has been introduced.

(xvi) Training facilities for drivers, guards and staff connected with train operation have been modernized including use of simulators for training of drivers.

(xvii) Refresher courses are regularly organized at specified intervals.

(xviii) Performance of the staff connected with train operations is being constantly monitored and those found deficient are sent for crash training.

(xix) Periodical safety drives are conducted to inculcate safety consciousness among the staff.

Poor Quality of Food in Trains

263. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the food served in running trains is not of good quality and the vendors roam about freely on the running trains and because of that there are a lot of thefts; and

(b) whether Ministry would take cognizance of these facts and improve the food, specially on long distance trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) No, Sir.